

Accession Number: A/6

Classification:

Date: 3 May 1974 6:30-8:00 p.m.

Place: Evanston Evanston Bank Main and Chicago Ave

Interview with: Mr. Marshall Barksdale

Interview by: S.F. Patton

Observations: Interview began half-hour late due to financial transaction. The interview was conducted in the board room of the Bank. Besides inquiring about professions/occupations, the objective of this interview was also to gain knowledge of his position within the Evanston Bank. He is Vice-president

1. Q. What is your name  
A. Marshall Barksdale
2. Q. Born in Evanston  
A. Yes
3. Q. Are you married  
A. Yes
4. Q. Do you have any children  
A. Yes, three children
5. Q. Boy and girl  
A. Two boys and one girl
6. Q. What is your wife's name  
A. Barbara
7. Q. What are the children's names  
A. Paula, Tony, David
8. Q. When were you born  
A. Jan. 6, 1937
9. Q. Was your wife born in Evanston  
A. No, Chicago



10 Q. What is her birthdate

A. Nov. 24, 1936

11 Q. Were your parents born in Evanston

A. My mother

12 Q. Where was your father born

A. St. Paul (Minn.)

13 Q. Are there other relatives in Evanston

A. Plenty, 20 - 30 relatives

14 Q. Were your mother parents born in Evanston

A. No. Her mother was born in Canada. Her father in South Carolina

15 Q. Date When did they arrive here

A. around 1915-1920

16 Q. What type of work were they doing when they met

A. My dad was a student teacher at Fisk and my mother was in his class

17 Q. When did they marry

A. 1934, I'm not sure

18 Q. Did they marry in Evanston

A. No. My father was Dean of Men at Florida Normal when I was born. Until I was five, I stayed in Florida during the school year and in the summer I was here. After five, I stayed with my grandmother. They wanted me here because of the better schools here

19 Q. Did you attend Foster grammar school

A. No. Dewey. Then Haven junior high, then Evanston Township

20 Q. Were there a considerable number of Blacks at Haven





A. Yes. Not as many as now. There were 10-15% then. There are about 35% now.

21 Q. After high school did you work or go to school

A. I rebelled against the family. All of my relatives were college graduates. I worked in a machine shop. My father died when I was in 7<sup>th</sup> grade. My mother raised my sister and me. I never studied hard, but I always was on the honor roll. I remember there was the scholarship exam at DuSable. My grandmother wanted me to go and said she'd let me drive her car. Well, it rained that day, and she wouldn't let me drive. My other friends, like Betty Adams, is one, she's Dean of Women at Lincoln University. I suffered a football injury so I couldn't get a athletic scholarship. I didn't want any family support.

22 Q. What was name of the company

A. W. Kates Co.

23 Q. What type of work

A. I worked at a gas station in the summer. I couldn't find a job. My uncle knew someone, Kates, at the factory. However only job they said they had for me was a janitor job. But I didn't want that, especially at 18 years old. So finally they said they would train me for the machinist trade. There were very few Blacks at that time as machinist in 1954. None were in the union, I believe. For four months I worked at the drill press, then I gradually moved up. Eventually I was a tool/dye maker.

24 Q. How much did you earn

A. \$2.50 an hour, a 40 hour week. There was overtime as well. I'd make \$150 a week in 1955

25 Q. How long did you work there

A. Well, this is a very involved story. Now, let me start at the beginning. My uncle was on the police dept., and he retired in 1963. In 1958, I decided to take the police exam. I was 21 then. There was the physical exam in Patten Gym, the medical exam and then you were examined before the exam board. I didn't hear from them for 4-5 months. I went on Tuesday to City Hall. They held the physical exam the night before, I had not received any notification and they said they





would not give me a make-up exam

In 1960 I made an application this was during the beginning of the year. In early Feb. I had a car accident and I broke my back. I married June 1960. I took the exam, and there was some difficulty because of my back injury. Everything was o.k. finally. I was 10 or 12 out of 15-20 guys; I was eligible. This was based on the total exam score.

In the meantime I was working at Kates. Pneumatic gauges were made by the company. This man, he invented and designed the gauges. We made these pressure machines. There was a strange friendship between us. He was a John Bircher, I thought so, because we would get these Bircher leaflets at the company. He resisted being bought out. I always received encouragement from him. I then received notice by the Police Department; I told them I'd let them know. Two days before I was offered the job of Purchasing Agent for the company. It was unheard of for Blacks. We worked with alloys; different grades of stainless steel which was resistant to acid. There was illium metal. These alloys were not common in the steel industry. I told him I would think about it. There were several reasons for hesitancy. I was married; I had family responsibility. The man was 55 years old and a very active athletic type--that's the way my father died, a referee in a football game. What if he dies, with my not completing the training. No one else was interested in the business in his family. A new company may come in with their own staff. Ultimately I went to the Police Dept. The civil service was security

26 Q. How long did you work for the department

A. Nine years. I began in 1961

27 Q. What was name of rank when you first entered

A. Patrolman

28 Q. What rank were you when you left

A. The same

29 Q. Any aspect about the Police Dept. you didn't like

A. They said I was too militant. I drove a two-wheeler at first. My brother-in-law, he's a captain now in the police dept.; he and his friend were the first two blacks on wheels. I was the third. I was then in the Detective Division and then the Community Relations Division. I resigned Jan. 1970

We'll go back to 1962. My uncle was on the police dept. He was a University of Illinois graduate. Since early





1930's Blacks were in the department. In 1962 there were 9 or 10 of whom 4 were college graduates and the rest had some college education. They were never above the rank of patrolman. There was no distinction of rank, even if you're a detective; all are patrolmen.

I was 42<sup>nd</sup> out of 50; I passed the exam to qualify as a detective. I was the youngest guy time-wise to pass. There were three phases of the exam: 1) written-30%, 2) efficiency exam-30% recommended by the commanding officer 3) the oral interview before the civil service -35% and 4) seniority - 5%. However you never knew what other exams comprised of your total other than the written exam.

30 Q. You never knew

A. You knew your score, never knew where it derived from, who evaluated what; how they scored you. During the two years interrum, we were always praised; we were hell of a guys, but when it came to the exams, particularly the efficiency exam we didn't pass.

My uncle never got out of uniform. He had a B.A. in Bus. Admin. or Accounting. There was a dummy who graduated from U. of Ill. with a degree in animal husbandry. He became lieutenant.

In 1965 was my next exam. The civil rights movement was going on. Evanston is a conservative city. Blacks here are either super educated, native born or domestic.

31 Q. This conservatism exists with Blacks

A. They were complacent to a certain extent. During the 1965 exam, my brother placed 12<sup>th</sup>; I was 24<sup>th</sup>. There was job security. But there was no large turnover, one didn't need a high school education

But something happened. There is the Traffic Institute at Northwestern. Some men spent 9 months in the Traffic Inst. Many got chief positions in other small towns. The dept. lost 10 guys, so there was 10 promotions. My brother was number 12 when the 11<sup>th</sup> guy was injured while on vacation, he was next for promotion. He was promoted. Many said they were not working for no Nigger.

32 Q. What was your brother's name

A. William Logan. He's head of Community Relations. Also head of the Detective Bureau. He's the only captain heading four separate divisions. The next exam was in 1967. During





this time I'm having aspirations. My score made me 12<sup>th</sup> or 13<sup>th</sup>. Logan was made Leutinant then.

33 Q. Was there any "static" by Whites for Blacks

A. We were not in on anything. None of the meetings. In 1967 no one made Captain. The community became more militant, so in 1969 we knew someone was going to make it. There was Andrew Rodrez who had a very good educational background, he had an M.A., etc. I decided to get an education, I started attending night school in 1967. The exam in 1969 resulted with Andy being number one and I was thirteenth. I was in the detective bureau for four years. I never thought the exams themselves were fixed. However, all of my subordinates were promoted. I had the highest number of arrests, of convictions. I was the first to check the narcotics exempt book of the pharmacies and I had received commendations by the police dept in Chicago. I never knew that, until I left the dept. and looked into my personal file

Before I left I thought I would attempt to make the policemen aware of the inequities of the dept., that is concerning the Black patrolmen. Yet I had to find a common denominator for the representation of the men in the department. I decided what will have the greatest appeal as a rally point was money. There had been previous grumblings about under payment.

There was segregation of Black patrolmen according to certain districts of the city. They were predominantly in the west side of Evanston. You know there are ambulance cars equipped with oxygen, etc. for emergency situations while taking the victim to the hospital. If a particular accident occurred in the West side and the car from the west side was on call, the department wouldn't send a north end ambulance car for the west side case. There were thirteen and fourteen Black men then. We began to document each man's encounter with prejudice and racial discrimination.

Then I surveyed the surrounding 21 areas. Every aspect was surveyed. We were 17<sup>th</sup> out of 21 forces in regards to benefits. The work load was 3 to 1 greater than any other town, yet we had 10 to 1 more cases for felony. There was a \$1200 disparity in pay between the Skokie police force and Evanston. Now this was 1969

No, that was 1968, because it took me a year to collect all the data. The Cook County Police Association was formed. The association was functioning as a bargaining agent. It was against the law to strike, and unionization was not allowed in civil service. So the "call-in-sick" was the alternative strategy. I was elected president of our chapter. It was nicknamed the "Blue-Flu" by the Chicago papers. While surveying the general make-up of the areas' departments, I gather-





ed information on the Blacks as well. There were two movements now. The chief, Burt Giddons would not meet with us; the city refused to recognize us. Burt Giddons was selected outside of Evanston, it was the first time Evanston went outside for a chief.

There was T.V. coverage of the bargaining and demands. The whole thing was quite controversial. There still was no recognition or arbitration by our department. Finally the city concedes on just about everything. There was now official bargaining power. There was \$2500 raise in salary just before I left

Racial discrimination was soon brought out in the newspapers. Then it happened ! The chief resigned. There were only two captains then. There was a civil law which stated the department didn't have to select the top listed men all the time; you didn't have to select the top listed men all the time. You didn't have to follow in sequential order, but some of the men had to be among the top. Also the civil code stated that you couldn't pass twice the same man.

Interviews were begun for the Chief of Police. We got 5000 signatures on a petition for William Logan from the Black community. The city stated they wanted a man who was educated, experience, etc. Bill was well qualified, he was an F.B.I. Academy graduate, taught at university, etc. Nine months and no chief. Finally Wm. Bill McQue was selected as the chief. The new chief created two new captain positions. In all, eleven promotions occurred. The department never acknowledged the petition. William Logan was the best man for the job, he had started the Community Relations Dept. and has been head of it since. Instead of Bill having 50% voting power, he now had 25% influence.

Remember, I was receiving public exposure because of the Association. In the meantime, the Evanston Bank was looking for a Balck as an officeholder. I had been turning them down for six months. Up to now, 1969, I intended to be a policeman; I only had 11 years to go. Then I could retire and go to school and study law. I would keep setting the demands higher and higher, each time I was approached.

Remember, I had no military points. I was 4-F because of the car accident. By now I was getting bitter; I had been passed twice. Men who were under me were promoted; sometimes they would have a few points better than I because of the military service.

Billy is my brother-in-law by the way. My old exams were thrown out after two years. I checked the codes and saw where an exam could be posted longer than two years. I was offered the Sargent position due to the protest of the Black policemen; they had threatened to resign if I left.





I decided to accept the position at the Bank I was the first Black officeholder in a bank in the history of Evanston. I demanded a background training in banking; to learn about loans, etc., and I wanted a decision-making position, one of authority. I wanted a position where I did not need approval from another person in order to function. I thought I could do good for other people. The best vehicle was as a policeman. We were discriminated in the police department. I can do more here. If you can't believe in self; you can not expect others to believe in you.

34 Q. Have more Blacks come here because of you

A. Yes and no

35 Q. Yes and no

A. There have been more Blacks and also more schysters and crooks. Popularity keep them from prostituting me here. I have 75% outstanding consumer loans and 25% delinquency loans. Half were marginal loans

36 Q. Who was the first Black police officer

A. Probably Henry White

37 Q. When was this

A. Around 1930

38 Q. Were there any Black firemen when you were in high school

A. I don't thing so. Sam Hicks has been one for 2 or 3 years.

39 Q. Are there more Black bank officers in Evanston now

A. Yes there are seven now There are 2 at State, and 2 at First National

40 Q. You said you attended night school, where

A. Kendall and Roosevelt. I'm still going to school. I have been going since 1966

41 Q. Has there been growing solidarity among Blacks here

A. Not between groups





42 Q. Could you elaborate

A. There are the militant vocal groups and the non-vocal groups. There is not as strong a bond as it should be

43 Q. Was there a distinctly wealth affluent class of Blacks here. Maybe I should define wealthy as upper middle for Blacks

A. No. I would not classify a wealthy group here. You didn't know it if they did have money.

My grandmother ran a catering business. She accumulated property. She died a year and a half ago she worked up until she was 75 years old. She catered for the Country Club. My grandfather worked; he died in 1963

44 Q. Was your grandmother business operated from home

A. Yes, it was prepared at home

45 Q. Was it a weekend only operation

A. Whenever, it was mostly weekends

46 Q. Was it profitable

A. Oh, she would make \$ 20 a party; maybe \$ 50

47 Q. What was your grandmother's name

A. Helen Cromer

48 Q. What was your grandfather's name

A. William Cromer

49 Q. What was your grandmother's maiden name

A. Oh, Helen Corneil, I believe

